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## Trump Critics on Climate Policy Hope Executives Can Sway Him

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Jeffrey R. Immelt, General Electric's chief executive, says [climate change](#) is real, a position at odds with the Trump administration.

As a member of a White House manufacturing advisory council, he also has President Trump's ear. And environmentalists are counting on Mr. Immelt, and other executives close to the president, to use that access to argue for policies to combat global warming when the White House is rolling them back.

The companies' business objectives and credibility are also at stake. Elon Musk of Tesla, another member of Mr. Trump's council, is building an energy business intended to avoid the need for fossil fuels in favor of solar panels, batteries and [electric vehicles](#). Doug McMillon of Walmart, the retail giant, has committed his company to [a sharp reduction](#) in the planet-warming gases it emits, as has Indra Nooyi of PepsiCo, the food and beverage company.

BlackRock, the world's largest publicly traded money manager — whose chief executive, Laurence D. Fink, sits on Mr. Trump's council — has pledged to press companies to address the effects of climate change on their businesses. And Intel, Johnson & Johnson and Campbell Soup were among [hundreds of businesses that urged](#) the United States after Mr. Trump's election to stick with the Paris climate agreement and its commitment to reduce carbon emissions.

"Mr. Trump says the business perspective is especially important, so hearing the business voice is critical," said Kevin Moss, of the World Resources Institute, an environmental research group in Washington.

"The companies are demonstrating that it's in their business interest to take action on climate," he said. "The more they're willing to say that and take action, the stronger the message comes across."

Those hopes have become increasingly urgent as Mr. Trump — against the warnings of scientists, environmentalists and even the government's own research — has moved to nullify the Obama administration's efforts on climate change.

On Tuesday, Mr. Trump directed the Environmental Protection Agency [to start withdrawing and rewriting Mr. Obama's Clean Power Plan](#), which would have closed hundreds of coal-fired power plants.

In a joint statement after the order, a group of technology companies, including Apple, Amazon, Google and Microsoft, urged Mr. Trump to stay the course.

“Strong clean energy and climate policies, like the Clean Power Plan, can make renewable energy supplies more robust and address the serious threat of climate change,” they said.

That action also spurred Mr. Immelt to write a blog post to G.E.’s 300,000 employees in which he criticized the rollback.

“We believe climate change is real and the science is well accepted,” said the post, [first reported by Politico](#). “This is just the beginning of what will be a long process” of a repeal, he said, but “no matter how it unfolds, it doesn’t change what G.E. believes.”

Jennifer Friedman, a General Electric spokeswoman, declined to say whether Mr. Immelt intended to relay his thoughts to Mr. Trump personally. Many other companies also declined to commit their executives to intervening with the president on climate-related policies.

But Ms. Friedman emphasized that Mr. Immelt was outspoken, and she cited G.E.’s focus on clean energy, including Current, a subsidiary that focuses on products and services in energy efficiency, renewable generation and energy storage to large customers.

“He’s pretty out there and clear,” she said. “That’s his position in every conversation he has.”

A PepsiCo spokesman, Jay Cooney, said the company believes that “combating climate change is critical to the future of our company, customers, consumers and our world.” Kevin Gardner of Walmart, said its environmental commitments were “embedded in our business.”

Thomas Hushen, spokesman for Campbell Soup, said the company supported “continued U.S. participation in the Paris agreement and the continuation of low-carbon policies and investment in a low-carbon economy.” Campbell’s chief executive, Denise Morrison, participates in Mr. Trump’s advisory council because “we believe it is important to have a voice on matters that will affect our industry, our company and our employees.” Mr. Hushen said.

Corporations, especially those with strong consumer brands, have been increasingly responsive to customer and shareholder concerns about climate change. And the global nature of their businesses means many of their customers are in countries where there is a greater acceptance of the science behind climate change, and the need to tackle it.

Walmart, Intel, General Motors and Lockheed Martin — all of which have senior executives on Mr. Trump’s business councils — have signed on to the principles of the Renewable Energy Buyers Alliance, a coalition of nonprofit groups working to make corporate purchases of renewable energy easier. Last year, General Motors said it would generate or procure 100 percent of its electricity from renewable sources by 2050.

Dell, another company with the president’s ear, says it expects to reduce the energy intensity of its products by 80 percent by 2020.

“In many cases, I think businesses disagree with the administration,” said [Danielle Fugere](#), president of [As You Sow](#), a nonprofit group that uses shareholder resolutions to advocate for greater corporate environmental and social responsibility.

“People still care about climate change,” she said. “The administration may not, but they do have consumers and employees and reputations to uphold.”

Some corporations’ positions on climate change are not as clear-cut as they may seem. Intel joined in a plea for the United States to honor the Paris agreement, concluded in 2015 and signed last year, but was also among companies that [submitted comments](#) critical of the carbon pollution regulations in the Clean Power Plan.

An Intel spokeswoman, Katie Lewallen, said, “Regardless of regulatory changes, we intend to continue our commitment to environmental stewardship, including working to fulfill the climate change pledge we made in 2015.”

Environmentalists also worry about the influence of companies that have opposed climate regulations. General Motors and Ford, for example, successfully advocated a review of stringent federal regulations on vehicle pollution.

And at least six companies with seats on Mr. Trump’s advisory boards — JPMorgan Chase, Walmart, Boeing, IBM, Dow Chemical and Lockheed Martin — also participate in the Business Roundtable, which in mid-February gave Mr. Trump a [wish list of 16 rules](#) it wanted killed, including the Clean Power Plan. (Walmart declined to address the discrepancy between that group’s demands and its climate commitments.)

Then there is the former ExxonMobil chief executive, Rex W. Tillerson, now secretary of state. Mr. Tillerson has publicly disparaged the Clean Power Plan, [calling it](#) “an unfortunate example of E.P.A. exceeding its authority” in a 2015 speech. But Exxon has also urged the Trump administration not to retreat from the Paris agreement and has supported a tax on carbon emissions.

Businesses are pushing for policies to fight climate change “because of a well-balanced economic judgment of whether or not they should,” said Hervé Touati, a managing director at the Rocky Mountain Institute, an environmental research group.

He added that sentiment among corporate executives had, after the 2009 global climate conference in Copenhagen, shifted away from the belief that fighting climate change would be too expensive.

“In Paris, there was a very significant number of business leaders that had changed their minds and considered that it was going to hurt the economy if we don’t do something,” he said.

Clifford Krauss contributed reporting.

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